

## **Folic Acid During Childbearing Years**

If you are a woman who can become pregnant, you should take at least 400 micrograms (or 0.4 mg) of folic acid every day. Folic acid, also known as folate, is a B-vitamin that can be found in some enriched foods and in vitamin pills.

If you have enough folic acid in your body when you become pregnant, this vitamin can lower the risk for birth defects of your baby's brain or spine. You need to be taking the vitamin before you become pregnant because, by the time you know you are pregnant, birth defects may already have formed in your child.

### **To get the folic acid you need:**

- Take a vitamin with 400 micrograms (or 0.4 mg) of folic acid (folate) every day. Both folic acid pills and multivitamins can be bought at grocery stores, pharmacies, or discount stores.
- OR, every day, eat a bowl of cereal that has 100% of the daily requirement of folic acid per serving. (The nutrition information on the cereal box will tell you how much folic acid is in each serving.)
- AND eat folate-rich fruits and vegetables and foods fortified with folic acid. Fruits, orange juice, green leafy vegetables, and dried beans, peas, lentils, and peanuts all have folate. Enriched pasta, rice, bread, and flour have added folic acid.

Reference Source: "The Pocket Guide to Good Health for Adults." U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality: May 2003.